

Submitter: Andrew Damitio

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Housing and Development

Measure: SB847

My name is Andrew Damitio.

While this bill SB 847 includes many outstanding provisions, I will focus exclusively on Section 25, which classifies SROs of up to 6 units as middle housing. Regarding Section 25, the inclusion of single room occupancies as middle housing formalizes and obligates cities to prescribe minimum standards to the most marginal form of market-rate housing out there: Single rooms rented on Craigslist, which often serve as the last housing option available to the poorest before outright homelessness.

Immediately following college, I lived in a formerly single family house that was illegally converted into multiple separate rentable bedrooms, with a shared kitchen and bathroom. If it wasn't for the cheap rent and month-to-month rental terms, I would have been forced to live in my car until I saved up enough for a deposit and first month's rent at a traditional apartment complex.

My housemates included two men undergoing divorces, a man who'd recently been released from prison, and a transient worker staying for only a month. It was a crash pad, a place for those at their very lowest. But we all had beds and rooms we could call our own.

The downside of the informal nature of the ad-hoc rooming house was that there was no oversight by the city. The landlord, in his urge to generate as much money out of the property as possible, fit 5 separate room rentals, some with couples, into a 1,300 sq/ft century old home with a single bathroom, causing significant crowding issues. The owner of the house was a construction manager who gladly would have pulled permits and formalized the SROs had he been allowed to under zoning, but couldn't. If there was city oversight of his SRO through a formalized permitting process, it's likely sensible limits could have been placed on the number of rooms he'd have been allowed to rent given the size of the building.

I want to reiterate that SROs like the one I lived in not only exists in every Oregon city already, but they're essential to a healthy labor force. Transient workers like salesmen need affordable places to rent on a short term basis. People who can't afford a rental deposit need a place to live. Unemployed people need a place to cheaply stay when hunting for jobs. If SRO housing is going to exist in Oregon's single family neighborhoods anyway, and it keeps the poorest from slipping into homelessness without the need for public subsidy, it's in the best interest of everyone.

for the state to prompt cities to allow and regulate them.

Thank you.